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ABSTRACT

A new consensus supported by the leadership of many religious and educational organizations sees the study of religion as essential if students are to be educated about the history and culture of the United States. This teaching guide is designed to accompany the 17-volume series, "Religion in American Life," aimed at young adults and general readers. The guide introduces the series and suggests how it may be used in the classroom in ways that are both constitutionally permissible and educationally sound. After introductory material about the series, the guide is divided into the following sections: (1) "The Civic and Constitutional Frameworks"; (2) "The New Consensus on Teaching about Religion"; (3) "Textbooks and Standards"; (4) "How To Teach about Religion"; (5) "Using Religion in American Life"; (6) "Opportunities for Teacher Education"; and (7) "Resources and Programs." More information about the "Religion in American Life" series and about the First Amendment Center concludes the guide. (BT)

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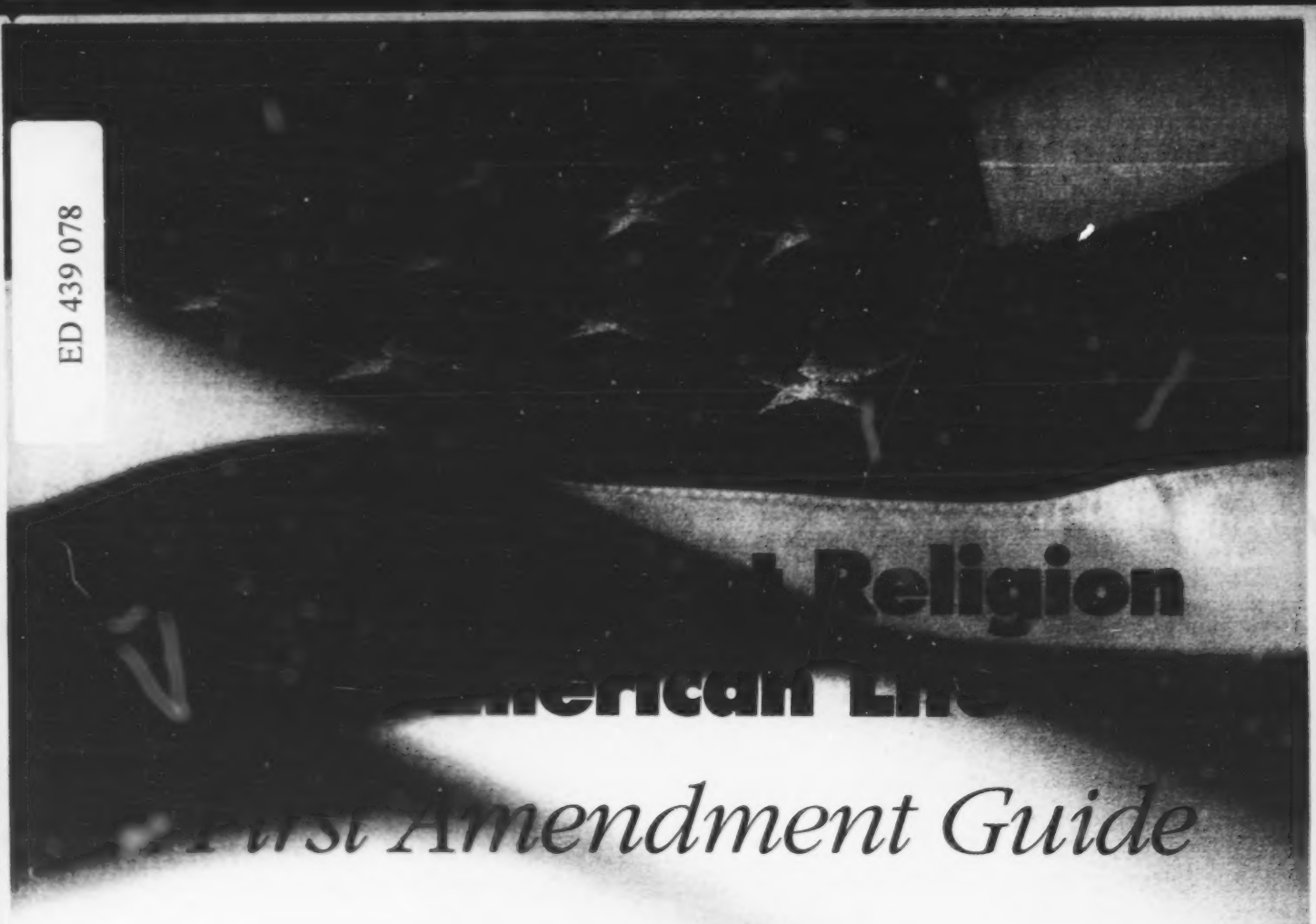

Religion

First Amendment Guide

By Charles C. Haynes

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A First Amendment Guide

By Charles C. Haynes

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Teaching about Religion in American Life: A First Amendment Guide
By Charles C. Haynes, Freedom Forum Senior Scholar

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Teaching about Religion in American Life

A First Amendment Guide

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ."

—Religious Liberty clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Educators widely agree that religious people, events, ideas, and movements—from the colonial period to the present—have been at the heart of the American story. Without understanding a good deal about religion, we can't understand the history of the United States.

Yet the study of religion in U.S. history has long been seriously neglected. Most state frameworks and standards, as well as the textbooks widely used in public schools, ignore religion. When religion does appear, the treatment is usually superficial, sometimes inaccurate, and almost always inadequate. As a result, many teachers are unprepared or hesitant to teach their students much about religion.

All that may be about to change. A new consensus supported by the leadership of many religious and educational organizations sees the study of religion as essential if students are to be educated about our history and culture. Textbooks and standards are beginning to include more about religion. And new resources are now available for helping teachers address religious events and ideas in their classes.

Among the most significant new resources for teachers and students is Religion in American Life, a 17-volume series published by Oxford University Press and written by leading scholars of American religion for young adults and general readers. This booklet introduces the series and suggests how it may be used in the classroom in ways that are both constitutionally permissible and educationally sound.

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The New Series from Oxford University Press

Religion in American Life is a major breakthrough in the effort to take religion seriously in the curriculum of public and private schools. The series is the first comprehensive and scholarly survey of religion in American history and society tailored to young readers. Written by major scholars, each volume presents material in the context of history and literature customarily taught in the schools and, therefore, familiar to young people. The threefold organization of the series—chronological, denominational, and topical—allows teachers and students to approach religion in America from a variety of perspectives, according to their interests and curricula.

Three chronological volumes trace the religious history of the United States from the colonial period to the present. Nine volumes cover significant religious groups in America, including Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Native Americans, and followers of Eastern faiths. Four volumes address specific topics—women, church-state issues, African-American religion, and immigration—that are particularly related to the role of religion in American society. Teachers and students of U.S. history, in particular, will find all the volumes helpful, and teachers and students of world history, government, and literature can use many of the volumes to supplement their study of these subjects. Books comprising the series can also be used as basic texts for elective courses on Religion in America, Religion in U.S. History, or World Religions.

With the Religion in American Life series available in school and classroom libraries, students and teachers will finally have access to scholarly works written for young people that fill the gaps left by inadequate textbook treatment of religion.

The Civic and Constitutional Frameworks

Educators must address the confusion and controversy surrounding the role of religion in public education if religion is going to be taken more seriously in the curriculum through the use of resources such as Religion in American Life. Unfortunately, when religion in the schools is at issue, extremes often dominate the debate. On one end of the spectrum are those who advocate promotion of religion (usually their own) in school practices and policies. On the other end are those who view public schools as religion-free zones.

Many educators (and textbook publishers) have tried to quell controversy by avoiding religion altogether. This strategy hasn't worked. Ignoring religion only increases tension, builds

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"[I]t might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization."

Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark
Abington Township School District v. Schempp (1963)

distrust, and frequently culminates in lawsuits.

In recent years, however, a third alternative has emerged, a view of public schools that is consistent with the First Amendment and broadly supported by many educational and religious groups. This new agreement on religion in public schools is best captured in "Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy," a statement of principles issued by 24 national organizations.

> Principle IV states:
> Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study *about* religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education.

This shared vision of religious liberty in public education is remarkable both for who says it and for what it says. The National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, and the Association of School Administrators joins with the Christian Legal Society, the American Center for Law and Justice, and Citizens for Excellence in Education in asserting these principles. The Anti-Defamation League and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations are on the list, as are the Council on Islamic Education and the Christian Educators Association International. Perhaps most remarkably, the Christian Coalition and People for the American Way are both sponsors.

The statement of principles signals a major consensus on how religion may be taught in the public schools without subverting the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."). At the heart of this agreement is the idea that public school officials should be neutral in matters of religion.

Neutrality, however, does not mean religion should be ignored. Silence about religion in the curriculum is hardly neutral; to many parents, it suggests hostility. Of

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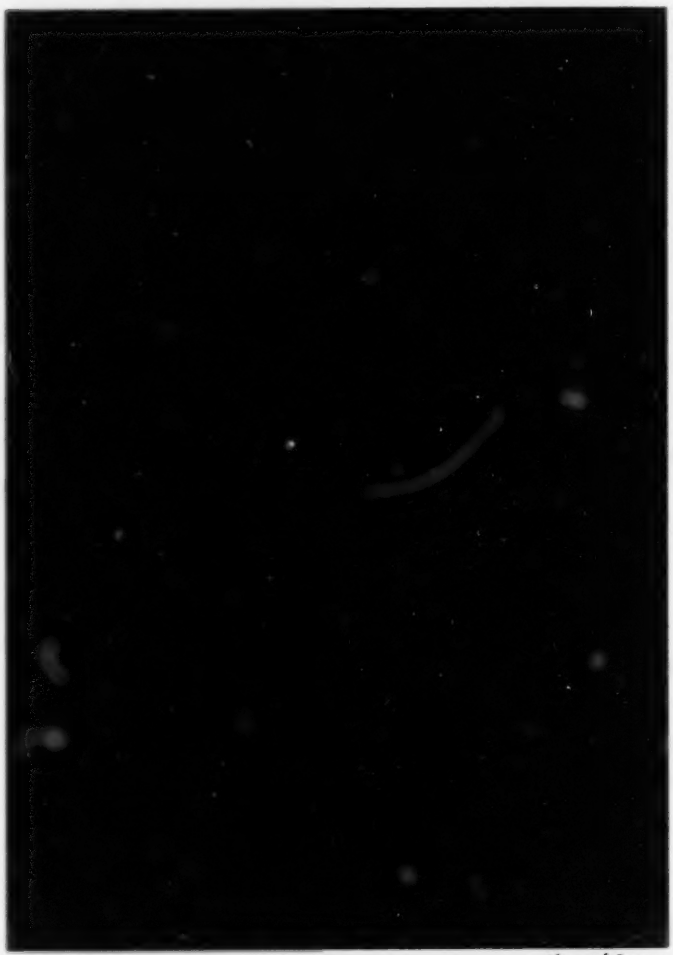
course, public schools cannot be in the business of religious indoctrination; faith formation is properly the province of the family and religious institutions. But at the same time, schools have an obligation to make sure that religion is taken seriously and understood. After all, religion is one of the most prominent features of all cultures. Neutrality requires fairness to religion.

There is also strong agreement about the meaning of the Free Exercise Clause ("Congress shall make no law ... prohibiting the free exercise [of religion]...") in the public schools. "Religion in Public Schools: A Joint Statement of Current Law," released in 1995, expresses the consensus views of 35 religious and civil-liberties groups on the religious-liberty rights of public school students. President Bill Clinton drew on the "Joint Statement" when he issued a directive through the U.S. Department of Education to all public school superintendents, outlining the constitutional and educational role of religion in the public schools.



James Madison, the nation's fourth president, is known as the father of the Constitution and the architect of the Bill of Rights.

Library of Congress

Under the First Amendment (as interpreted by the courts), students have extensive religious-liberty rights while in school. They have the right to pray alone or in groups, as long as the activity does not disrupt the school or infringe on the rights of others. Whenever relevant to the discussion, students have the right to express personal religious views in class or as part of a written assignment or art activity. Students

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have the right to distribute religious literature in public schools, subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions. In secondary schools, the Equal Access Act ensures that students may form religious clubs in schools that allow other extracurricular clubs. In short, students are not required to leave their religion at the schoolhouse door.

These agreements about the meaning of the First Amendment provide historic opportunities to end the confusion and controversy surrounding religion in the schools through establishment of an appropriate constitutional and educational role for religion in public education. A public school that takes religious liberty seriously takes religion seriously in the classroom.

The New Consensus on Teaching about Religion

The curriculum is a good place for public schools interested in modeling neutrality and fairness to begin. In 1988, a coalition of 17 major religious and educational organizations—including the Christian Legal Society, the American Jewish Congress, the National Education Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the Islamic Society of North America, and the National Association of Evangelicals—issued "Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers." That document describes the importance of religion in the curriculum thus:

> Because religion plays a significant role in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices, and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art, and contemporary life unintelligible.
>
> Study about religion is also important if students are to value religious liberty, the first freedom guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Moreover, knowledge of the roles of religion in the past and present promotes cross-cultural understanding essential to democracy and world peace.

A number of education groups—most notably the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)—have issued their own statements decrying the curricular silence about religion and calling for inclusion of such information in curricular materials and in teacher education. ASCD's report, "Religion in the Curriculum," recommends

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these decisive actions:

- State departments of education should address the issue of fair and factual treatment of religion in the curriculum by all local education agencies.
- Textbook selection committees at the state, district and local school levels should require treatment of religion in all curricular materials.
- Publishers should revise textbooks and other instructional materials to provide adequate treatment of diverse religions and their roles in American and world culture.
- Teacher educators, both pre-service and in-service, should ensure that teachers acquire not only the substantive knowledge required to teach about religion in society but also the attitudes and understanding necessary to treat the subject with sensitivity in the classroom.

Banished from Massachusetts because of his religious beliefs, Roger Williams founded a new colony—later to become the state of Rhode Island—where all could worship as they wished without interference from the government.

Architect of the Capitol

Three major principles form the foundation of this new consensus on teaching about religion in public schools:

1. As the Supreme Court has made clear, the study of religion in public schools is constitutional.
2. Because the study of religion is vitally important if students are to be properly educated about our history and culture, it is essential to include religion in the curriculum.
3. Religion must be taught objectively or neutrally; it must be the purpose of public schools to educate students about a variety of religious traditions, not to indoctrinate them into any particular tradition.

Textbooks and Standards

The new consensus on the importance of teaching about religion has begun to influence the treatment of religion in textbooks widely used in public schools, as well as state frameworks and standards for the social studies. The current generation of textbooks mention religion more often than their predecessors, and, in world history, sometimes offer substantive discussions of religious ideas and events.

United States history texts remain inadequate in their treatment of religion. The subject is mentioned occasionally, especially in early American history, but after the Civil War period it disappears almost entirely. Teachers who wish to give appropriate attention to the role of religion in our history will need supplementary materials.

State frameworks and standards are also beginning to take religion more seriously. The State Boards of Education in North Carolina and Utah, for example, have called for more teaching about religion in the social studies. In California, the History-Social Science Framework and the new History-Social Science Content Standards require considerable study of religion. In U.S. history, for example, California students are expected to learn the religious dimensions of the American story, from the influence of religious groups on social reform movements to the religious revivals, from the rise of Christian fundamentalism to the expanding religious pluralism of the 20th century.

Teaching about religion is also encouraged in the National Standards for History, published in 1996 by the National Center for History in the Schools. The elaborated standards in world history are particularly rich in religious references, examining the basic beliefs and practices of the major religions as well as how these faiths influenced the development of civilization in successive historical periods. While the U.S. history standards include religion less frequently, study of religion in history would nevertheless be expanded considerably if curriculum developers and textbook writers were guided by these standards.

A Faithful

NARRATIVE

OF

The Surprizing Work of GOD in the Converſion of many Hundred Souls in *Northampton*, of *New-England*, &c.

Library of Congress

This "faithful narrative" of many religious conversions in colonial Massachusetts helped to usher in the Great Awakening in the 1740s.

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How To Teach about Religion

Encouraged by the new consensus, public schools are now beginning to include more teaching about religion in the curriculum. In the social studies especially, the question is no longer "Should I teach about religion?," but rather "How should I do it?"

The answer to the "how" question begins with a clear understanding of the crucial difference between the teaching *of* religion (religious education or indoctrination) and teaching *about* religion. "Religion in the Public School Curriculum," the guidelines issued by 17 religious and educational organizations, summarizes the distinction this way:

- The school's approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.
- The school strives for student *awareness* of religions, but does not press for student *acceptance* of any one religion.
- The school sponsors *study* about religion, not the *practice* of religion.
- The school *exposes* students to a diversity of religious views; it does not *impose* any particular view.
- The school *educates* about all religions; it does not *promote* or *denigrate* any religion.
- The school *informs* students about various beliefs; it does not seek to *conform* students to any particular belief.

Once these distinctions are clear, two key challenges remain: teacher preparation and good academic resources. The First Amendment Center has established in-service programs throughout the nation to begin to meet the first challenge, and the Oxford series Religion in American Life is an important step toward meeting the second.

Good teachers know that classroom discussions concerning religion must be conducted in an environment that is free of advocacy on the part of the teacher. Students may, of course, express their own religious views, as long as they are germane to the discussion. But public-school teachers are required by the First Amendment to teach about religion fairly and objectively, neither promoting nor denigrating religion in general or specific religious groups in particular. When discussing religion, many teachers guard against injecting personal religious beliefs by teaching through attribution (e.g., by using such phrases as "most Buddhists believe ..." or "according to the New Testament ...").

But whose religion will be taught? And how much will be said? Decisions about which religions to include and how much to discuss

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about religion are determined by the academic requirements of the course being taught. In a course on American history, for example, Christianity will be given more time than other faiths because the influence of Christianity on America has been greater. But a world history course emphasizing Christianity and ignoring Eastern religions would be deeply flawed. The overall curriculum should include all of the major voices, and some of the minor ones, in an effort to provide the best possible education.

Of course, fairness and balance in U.S. or world history is difficult to achieve given the brief treatment of religious ideas and events in most textbooks and the limited time available in the course syllabus. That's why teachers need Religion in American Life and other supplemental resources that enable them to cover the required material within the allotted time while simultaneously enriching the discussion with study of religion.

African-American members enter Philadelphia's Muhahideen Mosque in 1973. Converts to Islam have been more prominent among Americans of African descent, especially those whose families migrated to northern cities in the early part of the 20th century.

Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa.

Using Religion in American Life

"Knowledge about religions is not only characteristic of an educated person, but is also absolutely necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity."

National Council for the Social Studies
"A Position Statement" (1984)

The most effective way to include religion in the curriculum is through use of age-appropriate materials that give a fair and objective account of the religious traditions to be studied. The Religion in American Life series is designed to meet this need. Not only is the series written by leading scholars, it is written for young people ages 12 and up.

The 17 volumes that comprise the series cover all of American history and provide in-depth discussions of all major (and some minor) religious traditions in the United States.

Teachers can use the volumes in a variety of ways. For example, they can augment consideration of some of American history's central themes —immigration or church-state issues, for instance—by assigning outside reading in the volumes that address those topics (*Church and State in America* and *Immigration and American Religion*). Teachers can also make available in the classroom library the chronological volumes covering *The Colonial Period*, *The Nineteenth Century*, and *The Twentieth Century* as ongoing supplements to the entire course.

Any of the series volumes might be used as the basis for student reports or research projects on one of the major faith groups in America or on a topic in U.S. religious history that the student finds particularly interesting. The volumes on Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, Native Americans, Mormons, and adherents to Eastern religions provide an in-depth, scholarly look at each of these traditions. *Women and American Religion* and *African-American Religion* are examples of topical volumes that include information often neglected or treated superficially in textbooks.

It is important to note that using the series need not "add on" to an already overcrowded course schedule, taking time away from topics which must be covered in a short period of time. On the contrary, the series can make it easier to cover the material by providing new and exciting ways to teach the required topics. Every teacher of American history, for example, must cover the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. By reading portions of *African-*

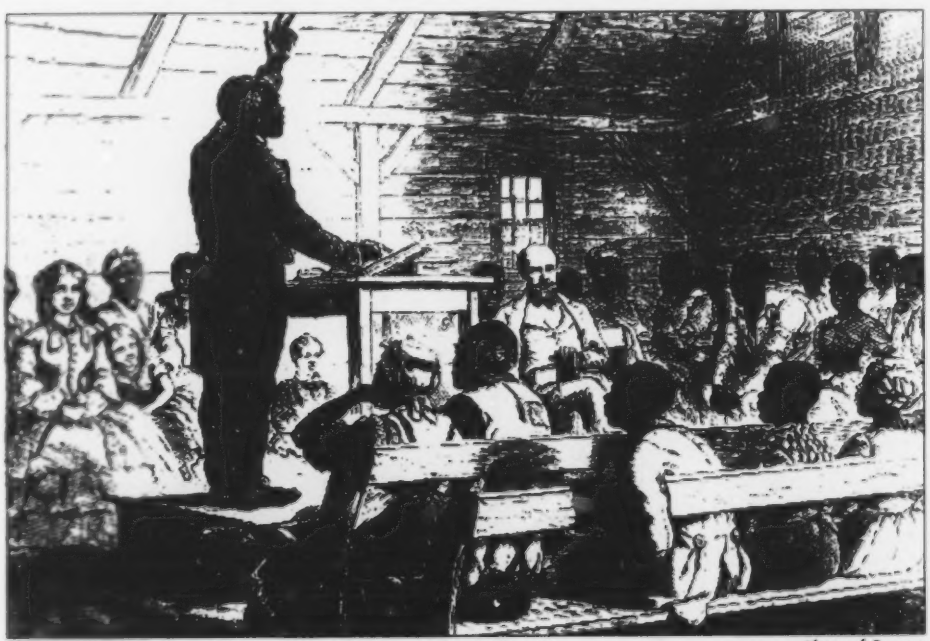
American Religion, students will learn not only about Reconstruction but also about the role of the black churches in the lives of the freed slaves. Later in the course, students will be able to grasp the religious motivations behind the civil rights movement and the role of the church in contemporary African-American life.

Use of the series need not be confined to courses in American history. Civics and Government teachers and students will find many of the volumes helpful for such topics as the origins of American democracy (*The Colonial Period*), the expansion of basic rights (*Church and State in America*), and the evolution of American identity and citizenship (*Immigration and American Religion*).

Students in world history or geography classes can deepen their understanding of the religions at the heart of the world's cultures and civilizations by reading the volumes on Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Eastern religions.

Literature teachers will find that all the volumes provide historical context for major American literary works. Primary source documents such as sermons, memoirs, letters, poems, and songs, found throughout the series, are especially useful for the study of American literature.

Beyond the core curriculum, Religion in American Life will enable schools to create a variety of electives in religious studies. Taken together, the chronological volumes could well serve as basic texts for a course in Religion in American History. A course in Religion in America or World Religions in



Christian slaves in America sometimes worshiped with the family of their masters. They also met on their own to hold services without white supervision.

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Rabbi Sally J. Priesand was the first woman to be ordained a rabbi in America.

American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

America could be designed using all or some combination of the group volumes. Each of the topical volumes could function alone as the basic text for courses, or units within a course, on Women in American Religion, African-American Religion, or Church and State in America. If religion is to be taken seriously in the curriculum, then electives are necessary to provide opportunities for in-depth study of its many facets.

Opportunities for Teacher Education

In addition to good classroom resources, many teachers in public and private secondary schools seek educational opportunities for expanding their knowledge of the world's religions. The First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University supports initiatives in several regions of the country designed to prepare public-school teachers to teach about religion in ways that are constitutionally permissible and educationally sound.

The most extensive of these programs is the California 3Rs Project (Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect), begun in 1991. Co-sponsored by the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, the project has an extensive network of resource leaders and scholars throughout the state providing support for classroom teachers. Teachers trained by the project give workshops for their colleagues on the constitutional and educational guidelines for teaching about religion. Religious studies scholars from local colleges and universities are linked with school districts to provide ongoing expertise and periodic seminars on the religious traditions that teachers are discussing in the curriculum.

Utah has a similar 3Rs project that is currently building a network of resource leaders in all of Utah's school districts. In Georgia, the state Humanities Council runs an ongoing program working with teachers in each region of the state. Texas, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania have 3Rs projects in various stages of development.

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Two universities, Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania, offer master's level programs that are excellent opportunities for both current and prospective public- and private-school teachers interested in learning more about the study of religion and religious-liberty issues in American public life.

At Harvard Divinity School, the Program in Religion and Secondary Education prepares students to teach at the secondary level and offers public high school teachers certification in one of three fields to which the study of religion makes a direct contribution. Coursework is done in the context of one of the Divinity School's master's programs and in conjunction with the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The University of Pennsylvania offers the Religion in Public Life Certificate Program within the Master of Liberal Arts Program. Students are able to choose from courses covering such topics as church/state relations in America, issues in teaching about specific Eastern and Western religious traditions, and religious art, music and holidays in the public sphere.

Resources and Programs

- A full discussion of the place of religion in the curriculum may be found in *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* (1998), written by Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes and published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the First Amendment Center. To order, call ASCD at (800) 933-2723, press 2.
- For background documents and consensus guidelines for understanding the civic and constitutional framework for teaching about religion, see *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education* (1994, 1996, 1998), edited by Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas. Published by the First Amendment Center, *Finding Common Ground* also provides an extensive list of organizations and classroom resources for teaching about religion in public schools. Call (615) 321-9588 to order.
- For the latest developments in First Amendment law and new listings of resources for administrators and teachers, visit the Religion section of the First Amendment Center's Web site: www.freedomforum.org.

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- For details about the Rights, Responsibilities and Respect programs, contact Marcia Beauchamp, Religious Freedom Programs Coordinator/First Amendment Center, Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center, One Market St., Steuart Tower, 21st Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 281-0900.
- For more information about the Program in Religion and Secondary Education at Harvard University, contact The Divinity School, 45 Francis Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138. Attention: Nancy Richardson, Director.
- Inquiries about the Religion in Public Life Certificate Program at the University of Pennsylvania should be addressed to Janet Theophano, Associate Director, Master of Liberal Arts Program, College of General Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 3440 Market St., Suite 100, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3335.

Religion in American Life

Religion in American Life
Jon Butler and Harry S. Stout,
General Editors
Yale University

List of Volumes

Religion in Colonial America
Jon Butler
Yale University

Religion in Nineteenth Century America
Grant Wacker
Duke University

Religion in Twentieth Century America
Randall Balmer
Barnard College

Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs in America
Gurinder Singh Mann (Sikhs)
Columbia University

Paul David Numrich (Buddhists)
University of Illinois, Chicago

Raymond B. Williams (Hindus)
Wabash College

Catholics in America
James T. Fisher
St. Louis University

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Jews in America
Hasia R. Diner
New York University

Mormons in America
Claudia Lauper Bushman &
Richard Lyman Bushman
Columbia University

Muslims in America
Frederick Denny
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Orthodox Christians in America
John H. Erickson
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Protestants in America
Mark Noll
Wheaton College

African-American Religion
Albert J. Raboteau
Princeton University

Alternative American Religions
Stephen J. Stein
Indiana University

Church and State in America
Edwin S. Gaustad
University of California, Riverside

Immigration and American Religion
Jenna Weissman Joselit
Princeton University

Native American Religion
Joel W. Martin
Franklin & Marshall College

Women and American Religion
Ann Braude
Harvard University

Biographical Supplement and
Series Index
Darryl Hart & Ann Henderson Hart
Westminster Theological Seminary

About the First Amendment Center

FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER
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The First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., is an independent operating program of The Freedom Forum. The Center was established on Dec. 15, 1991, the 200th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution. The Center's mission is to foster public understanding of and appreciation for First Amendment rights and values, which comprise freedom of religion, speech and the press, the right to petition the government and to assemble peacefully. The Center serves as a forum for dialogue and debate on free-expression and freedom-of-information issues.

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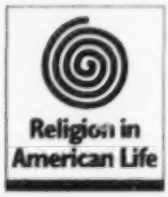

Jon Butler & Harry S. Stout
General Editors

Religion in American Life is a seventeen-book series that explores the evolution, character, and dynamics of religion in American life from 1500 to the present day. Written by distinguished American historians, these books weave together the varying stories that compose the religious fabric of the United States, from Puritanism to alternative religious practices. Single copies of this First Amendment Guide are available free of charge from Oxford University Press with the purchase of any five books (or five copies of a single title) in the series. To order individual titles or the complete set, or for further information, please contact the publisher:

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